

SEYMOUR, HORATIO

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# Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

Horatio Seymour

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# The New-York Times.

NEW-YORK, MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 1879.

## THE FARMER STATESMAN

HORATIO SEYMOUR, OF DEERFIELD.

THE LONG AND SUCCESSFUL CAREER OF AN OLD-TIME DEMOCRAT—THE EX-GOVERNOR'S RECOLLECTIONS OF POLITICS A GENERATION AGO, AND REMINISCENCES OF CLAY, WEBSTER, PIERCE, AND THE LEADERS OF THAT PERIOD—UNPUBLISHED LETTERS FROM PRESIDENT LINCOLN AND SECRETARY STANTON—GOV. SEYMOUR'S PERSONAL PLATFORM.

### BORN IN THE WILDERNESS.

DEERFIELD, N. Y., AUGUST 1879.

SEVENTY years ago Central New-York was little better than a wilderness. It is true that here and there upon the hill-tops a clearing had been cut, and hilly settlers from New-England, braving many dangers, literally fighting with wild beasts for possession of the soil, had made for themselves primitive homes. But here great cities now stand, giant forest trees than towers; roads were almost unknown; and the valleys were in places untroubled reaches. Pompey, a hamlet of a few hundred inhabitants, established on an elevation overlooking an unsightly swamp, now the flourishing City of Syracuse, was the principal place in Oneida County. Is it, on a May morning in the year 1810, surrounded by pathless wilds, shut out from the civilized settlements of the East and of the Atlantic coast, deep in the backwoods, was born Horatio Seymour, who has since been the foremost leader of a great political party, who is today one of the foremost men in the greatest Republic on earth. It has been his lot to watch the retreating footsteps of savage tribes, to witness the first steps and the highest achievements of an advanced civilization.

The conditions under which his early life was passed were indeed remarkable ones. The people of his native village, like those of every other community then established in Central New-York, were poor—constantly engaged in a struggle to gain food and clothing. At the same time, however, they were contented and hopeful. They were inspired by kindly sympathies which sprang from common wants. All intercourse was upon a level. No man envied his neighbor, for nowhere did the glare of wealth put poverty to shame. Coming, as most of them did, from the old and, to a certain extent, cultured settlements of Massachusetts and Connecticut, one of their first cares was to provide schools for their children. To this end no efforts were spared, and Mr. Seymour relates, as within his own recollection, the fact that some of the men of Pompey put mortgages upon their lands that proper institutions of learning might be furnished for the boys and girls of the settlement. The first churches they undervalued sacrifices, and when all other means failed, it is a matter of record that, in order to attract a crowd of hardy backwoodsmen to add in lifting up the framework of one of their places of worship, they announced that when the steeple had been so erected an adventurous youth, who had more love for the cause than regard for his neck, would stand upon his head on its highest point. So, when the news was sold, the deacons, seated upon the pulpit stairs a bucket of rum punch, to make more liberal the spirit of the bidders for seats.

It has, with much truth, been said that those were "the days of vital piety, sound Democracy, and pure liquor." They were, at least, days in which men of all occupations, classes, and conditions mingled together with the utmost freedom. The village inn was then the great place of public resort, and in its ample room, warmed by a great fire of blazing logs, farm laborers and lawyers, doctors and shopkeepers, clergymen and publicans met upon an equal footing, to talk over the affairs of their own district, of the State, and the nation. Such discussions were open to every one who cared to take part in them. Men of all parties then heard both sides of questions which agitated the public mind. They learned to temper their prejudices, correct their opinions; and ministers of the Gospel, lawyers, and politicians, knowing more of human nature than do their fellows of to-day, gained greater personal followings, and knew better how to retain the regard of their constituents. It was in those old days, and under the conditions I have attempted to describe, that Horatio Seymour was born, and passed his early childhood. His father, Henry Seymour, afterward an honored public servant of the Empire State, was then one of the men of most consequence in the village of Pompey; but at a time when men of all classes were at a moment's notice called upon to protect each other from the attack of some adventurous bear or wolf, as the early settlers of Central New-York were more than once obliged to do, exclusiveness was not one of the marks of distinction. Young Seymour was taught, when in his infancy, that no man in this country is born better than another; that the most exalted in the land, if they will take the trouble, can learn many a useful lesson from the humblest. He never in after life forgot these facts, and to his remembrance of them, as well as to other impressions which he received in the home of his infancy, he may well attribute much of the popularity which, in the years that followed, made him a leader of the American people.

### II.

#### SCHOOL-BOY DAYS.

Among the many stories which have been told in regard to the youth of Horatio Seymour is one to the effect that at a remarkably early age he developed a decided taste for study, and, while yet in his infancy, distanced all his school competitors. This is very far from being the truth. The fact is that he was weak and sickly in his childhood, and, for a time, was not nearly so advanced in his studies as were other boys of the same age. At all times, however, he was a close, keen observer of what was going on about him, and what he may have lacked in book knowledge was perhaps more than made good by a varied store of information picked up at odd times, at random, and without effort. As is usually the case with men who, springing from the people, have had marked success in life, he received his first lessons from his mother, the daughter of Jonathan Forman, a soldier of the Revolution. Under her watchful care he was, with some difficulty, it must be confessed, initiated into the mysteries of spelling-books and primers. He still cherishes the memory of her patience and devotion, fully believing that to them he owes much of the prosperity and happiness which have fallen to his lot.

When the boy was about 8 years of age, his father, who had meanwhile acquired some property, moved from Pompey to the

growing town of Utica. A year or two afterward the boy was sent to the Oxford Academy, a famous institution in those days, and from there went to Geneva, now Hobart, College. During all this time, however, he continued to be weak and delicate, and in his fifteenth year, hoping that the exercise of the institution might be of benefit to him, his father sent him to a military school at Middletown, Conn., which was conducted on the West Point principle and attended by the sons of distinguished men from all parts of the Union. Here he daily gained strength and health, studied hard, improved rapidly, and made many friends among young men who were destined in after-life to take a prominent part in the affairs of the country.

### III.

#### IN WASHINGTON AMONG STATESMEN.

When he was 16 years of age, and had passed two years in the Middletown academy, his managers, one of whom was an officer of the United States Army, decided to take the student upon a trip to Washington. This they did for the twofold purpose of giving the young man a season of recreation, and at the same time making them acquainted with the leading men of the country. Young Seymour, with the rest, reached Baltimore without any adventure of note, but at that place he, Thomas H. Seymour, his cousin, who afterward became Governor of Connecticut, and Isaac Morse, subsequently the Attorney-General of Louisiana, and a Representative in Congress from that State, strayed off from their companions. Coming from the country as they did, everything in the great city was new to them. They wandered about aimlessly, but being greatly interested, took no note of time, and when they returned to their hotel were much astonished to find that their fellow-students had left for Washington two hours before! The stage which in those days was the only regular means of communication between Washington and Baltimore, had also departed, and they were not sufficiently supplied with money to think of hiring a private conveyance. There was no help for it, they would have to walk to the capital. Quickly coming to this decision, they secured their muskets, strapped on their knapsacks—it will be remembered that they were dressed in the uniforms of the academy and set out on their lonely tramp. They walked all night, and just as day was breaking entered Washington, and shortly afterward rejoined their corps.

The capital, as it then appeared, was, according to Mr. Seymour's recollection, an unsightly and badly-built settlement of seven or eight thousand inhabitants. The streets were unpaved and muddy, and Pennsylvania Avenue, now the pride of the city, was divided into two carriage-ways by four lines of poplar trees, which extended from the President's mansion to Capitol Hill. The White House itself was not yet finished, the great East Room, in which public receptions are now held, being then used by the President's household, to dry clothes in. Aside from the public buildings, there were but few houses of respectable dimensions in the place, and most of the Senators and Representatives lived in rooms over the stores on Pennsylvania Avenue and adjacent streets.

As may well be imagined, the company of well-dressed and trim cadets to which young Seymour was attached created no little excite-



ment in this Washington of the olden time. The young men who were members of the corps came from all parts of the country; many of them had fathers, uncles, or other relatives in Congress, and they had not been many hours in the city before it was arranged that they should be publicly received by the President, John Quincy Adams, and his Cabinet, and that afterward they should visit the Senate Chamber, the House of Representatives, and the various departments of the Government. Young Seymour, whose uncle, Horatio Seymour, after whom he was named, was then one of the Senators from Vermont, had peculiarly good opportunities of seeing and talking with all the great men of the day, and he still retains the liveliest recollections of his first visit to the capital. Henry Clay, with whom he had a number of short conversations, he describes as having been "tall in stature, graceful in action, and most winning in speech." The great Whig was particularly attentive to the cadets, and to the best advantage displayed one of his marked characteristics by recalling the name and inquiring after the welfare of some relative or friend of each of the many young men to whom he spoke. His manner was in marked contrast to the cold, critical, and somewhat haughty demeanor of President Adams, who, when the cadets visited him, was formal and stiff almost to stammering. Later in life, however, Mr. Seymour found him, out of the Presidential chair, in a very different mood—full of humor, anecdote, genial and sympathetic as could be desired.

Cathoun, who, like Clay, impressed the student most forcibly, was, as Mr. Seymour remembers him, tall and commanding in figure, very erect in his bearing, and to an extent coldly dignified. In manner and address, however, he was so simple, affable, and unassuming as to win the sincere regard of all with whom he came in contact. In conversation he practiced none of those arts which so-called great men of the present bring into requisition to give the world a greater idea of their importance. He was frank and open almost to a fault, talked fully and freely to the humblest of men upon topics of the utmost State importance, and even seemed anxious to gain the confidence and listen to the opinions of young Seymour and his schoolmates. Still another of the distinguished men of the day pointed out to the cadets was John Randolph, of Virginia. He was a remarkable figure in the old Senate Chamber. Thin, pale, and delicate, greatly resembling Mr. Alexander Stephens, the present member from Georgia, though without that gentleman's infirmities, he added to the singularity of his appearance by wearing tightly-fitting small clothes, top-boots, spurs, and a long quiver. Of course, the boys stared at him, and he seemed to be exceedingly annoyed in consequence.

Daniel Webster, whom Mr. Seymour also saw and heard during his stay in the capital, he remembers chiefly as being, to use his own words, the possessor of "a voice of great power and depth; a voice full of magnetism; a voice such as is heard only once in a lifetime."

Grossly as that voice impressed him, however, it fell far short of producing the effect upon his young and impressionable imagination which was at this time occasioned by a visit which he and the other cadets made to Vaux's Vernon and the grave of Washington. While there he witnessed the removal of the great man's remains from the tomb in which they were first interred to their present resting-place. He was allowed to lay his hands upon the coffin, and to-day, old and full of honors though he be, he speaks earnestly, almost reverently, of that

occurrence as one of the greatest events of his life.

#### IV.

#### THE DAYS OF JACKSON.

Some years after these school-boy experiences, Mr. Seymour again visited Baltimore and Washington, going in company with his father, who was a delegate to the National Convention, which was held in the former city and nominated Jackson for the second time. In those days, (whether because of a lack of interest or the many difficulties which travelers were obliged to encounter need not be discussed,) political meetings, even those of national importance, attracted nothing like the attendance and attention which they now receive. The Baltimore Convention in question was held in a church of ordinary size, which was not more than half filled by delegates and spectators. A day or two before it came together a warehouse, belonging to Phelps, Dodge & Co., even then an exclusive firm, had fallen in, killing and wounding several persons, and it is possible that fears of a similar accident prevented many from attending the convention. At all events, Mr. Seymour remembers that the audience was a very small one, and that among the delegates there was quite as much talk about falling walls and broken lanes as there was regarding politics and the success of the Democratic Party. In short, the people in the chaises were filled with vague fears of they knew not what, and were ready at a moment's notice to lose their wits from fright. They soon had the opportunity. Suddenly, in the middle of the proceedings, one of the beams which supported the roof of the building was heard to crack! At the same moment two or three pieces of plaster fell to the floor with a crash. "The church is falling in," some unduly excited person shouted, and at once there was a panic and a wild rush of men to the doors. Of course, the so-called means of exit opened toward the interior—it will be noticed that on such occasions they always do—and young Seymour, carried along with the crowd, was violently thrown against a panel which had been closed by the first crush, and narrowly escaped serious injury. As good fortune would have it, however, all the delegates and their friends made their way out of the building with whole bones. Then, finding that there was no danger, they went back to the business for which they had assembled, and as I have already stated, the convention resulted in the re-nomination of President Jackson.

Henry Seymour, Horatio's father, was at this time one of the powerful company of New-York politicians known as "the Albany Regency," and it was due in great measure to their efforts that Jackson had been successful. In recognition of their services, the President, when they went to Washington, invited them to dine with him. Young Seymour went with the rest, and, as was perhaps only natural, expected to be present at no uninteresting or more than ordinary brilliancy. In this he was disappointed. Jackson had no taste for brilliant entertainments, and on the occasion in question had simply invited a few gentlemen to an informal dinner, made up of the very plainest viands. The company was decidedly a mixed one. It comprised eight persons, most conspicuous among whom were Jackson himself and, seated directly opposite him, "Nick" Biddle, the President of the Bank of the United States. Every one present knew that the war

on the bank, which had then for some time been contemplated by the Administration, must soon be commenced, and would doubtless result in the complete overthrow of Biddle and his friends; and under the circumstances it was a matter of some remark, not only that Jackson had invited that gentleman, but that he treated him with marked courtesy—a courtesy which was returned with interest. "Old man Creamer," a noted politician of that day, and a most enthusiastic supporter of Jackson, who, by reason of his round face, fiery-red hair, and a coat badly torn under the arm, cut quite a figure at the table, did not seem either to understand or to let this mutual politeness; and several times during the dinner it was evident that he was on the point of making some remark offensive to Biddle. He was always restrained by a quick glance from the keen eye of the President, however, and the company separated on the best of terms. Soon afterward it was evident that if Jackson's marked attention to Mr. Biddle had any significance, it at least could not be taken as an indication that the attack on the United States Bank was to be abandoned. The President's financial policy was continued, and in the end, as need hardly be stated, resulted in breaking down the bank.

#### V.

#### ENTERING PUBLIC LIFE.

When Horatio Seymour left the military academy at Middletown, he had completely recovered from the sickness of his childhood and, strong in body and with a mind well trained and stored with much useful knowledge, he returned to Ulster, and, entering the office of Green C. Bronson and Samuel Boardley, commenced to study law. In due course he was admitted to the Bar. At about the same time, however, he married Miss Mary Bleeker of Albany, a young lady of many accomplishments, a descendant of one of the oldest and wealthiest families in New-York, and, being charged with the management of her large estate in addition to his own, he never entered actively upon the practice of his profession. At a time when every lawyer was a politician, however, and when politics and religion were the resources of country life, it was hardly to be expected that a young man of Mr. Seymour's antecedents, education, and surroundings could long keep aloof from affairs of State. His early visits to Washington had, to a certain extent, made him familiar with the public men and methods of the day, his association with Messrs. Bronson and Boardley, both of whom took high rank as party leaders, and who subsequently held the highest judicial position in the Commonwealth, the precept and example of his distinguished father and uncle, together with his own inclination, conspired to lead him into public life. Having the desire, the way was soon open to him. He was introduced to William L. Marcy, then Governor of New-York, and was soon afterward made one of his staff; in time he became the confidential friend of that great man, and has since played a prominent part and taken the deepest interest in the government of the State and nation.

While with Gov. Marcy he had every opportunity of becoming thoroughly familiar with the routine of legislative bodies, and in the Assembly of 1842, to which he was elected by the Democrats of Otsego, he was, because of this experience, able, without the usual preliminary training, to take a prominent position; and in that year the Legislature of New-York was a body in which no man of ordinary ability could hope to stand such a place. He



Michael Hoffman, Sanford E. Church, John A. Dix, David R. Floyd-Jones, George R. Davis, Lemuel Stetson, and Calvin T. Hulburd were among the leaders, and many legislators of no mean ability were content to be their followers. Among such a company, it was a matter of surprise, even to his friends, that Horatio Seymour should from the first take a leading part, but that he did so there can be no doubt. Judge Hammond, in his "Life and Times of Elias Wright," referring to "the new member from Oneida," says: "We have seldom known a man who possessed higher and better qualifications for usefulness and success in a popular government than Horatio Seymour. Kind and social by nature, affable in his deportment, possessing a shrewd, discerning mind, fluent, and at times eloquent, in debate, enlarged in his views, liberal almost to a fault to his opponents, and fascinating in his address, no man seemed better calculated to acquire an influence in a legislative body than he, and few men at his time of life have, in fact, acquired a better standing or more substantial moral power. He had early in life made himself well acquainted with the great and varied interests of the State of New-York, an acquisition which aided him much in debate and gave him an advantage over older members, and which, at the same time, enabled him to render services in legislation highly useful and beneficial to the State." A reference to the speeches of Mr. Seymour during the memorable session of 1812, particularly to his addresses in regard to Michael Hoffman's famous bill for restoring the financial credit of the State, by which, for the first time in its history, a tax for the support of the Government was levied directly upon the people, will show that the young legislator deserved all the praise which Judge Hammond gave him.

## VI.

### AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL EPOCH.

Returning to Utica after his first session in the Assembly, Mr. Seymour was elected Mayor of that city, defeating the Whig candidate by an unusually large majority. The next Winter he was again chosen to the Legislature, and continued to serve in that body until the Spring of 1815. This period was one of the most important and exciting in the political history of the State. Gov. Bouck's administration had met with much opposition in the Legislature, and as the event proved, the bitter debates which grew out of this opposition led to disorganization and discord, and at last to Democratic defeat. Horatio Seymour was one of the few men who properly understood the situation, and he never lost an opportunity of counseling his party friends to be moderate in their utterances and conciliatory toward their associates. But his warning was not heeded. Indeed, there was more than one old politician who laughed at him as an alarmist, and for the moment, it must be confessed, the casual observer of political events could see no reason for the fears which he entertained. Never in its history had the Democratic organization achieved a greater victory than crowned its efforts in 1814. Both the great parties had put forth their utmost strength, the excitement had been intense, and the result a decisive, a bitter, and humiliating defeat for the Whigs. In the State of New-York, as well as in the nation, their chosen leaders had been buried out of sight by the majorities given to their opponents. Elias Wright, the Democrat, had been elected Governor over Fillmore, their strongest man, and "Harry" Clay, the greatest Whig of all, the hero of his party, the idol of his personal followers had been defeated for the Presidency by James K. Polk, of whom nobody knew. To talk of Democratic discord after such a victory seemed to be little short of madness, yet Mr. Seymour, with wonderful foresight, anticipating what, in the light of later events, may be

called the inevitable result of the "Barnburner" and "Hunker" war, just then springing up, continued to preach harmony and unity.

It was under these circumstances that the legislative session of 1815 opened at Albany. The Democrats were largely in the majority, but Horatio Seymour was the only Democratic member of the Assembly who had filled the same position in the preceding year. He was recognized as a man of the greatest experience and ability, and the "Hunker" wing of the party, to which he had become attached, named him as a candidate for Speaker. "The Barnburners" supported Col. Crain, of Herkimer, and the contest which followed is still remembered by old habitués of the State Capitol as one of the most exciting which ever occurred there. There can be no doubt that Mr. Seymour, seeing as he did the evil results which must follow to his party, sincerely deplored the bitterness and intensity of the struggle, and it is a matter of record that in the interest of harmony, he made several efforts to withdraw his name. This, however, he could not do. His friends insisted that he must go on with the canvass, and making up his mind that his political future depended upon his success, he went into the contest with all the great energy of which he was capable. Distinguished men from all parts of the State went to Albany to take sides for or against him. The Federal office-holders did their utmost for him, while nearly every prominent employe of the Canal Board was at work in the interest of Col. Crain. So the fight went on for several days, until just before the meeting of the caucus which was to decide it, when it seemed certain that Mr. Seymour must succeed. At the last moment, however, his opponents began to circulate what appeared to be a well-authenticated story to the effect that Gov. Wright was very much opposed to the "Hunker" candidate, and had expressed a desire for the success of Col. Crain. This report injured Mr. Seymour greatly, and without delay he, with two friends, went to see the Governor. They found the round-faced, bright-eyed, and first-mouthed old statesman preparing his Message, and the candidate for Speaker, at once making known his business, said:

"If it is true, Governor, that you would regard my success unfavorably, I will without delay withdraw my name, though by such action I will greatly injure myself. Still, I desire the success of your administration above all personal considerations, and whatever your wishes in the matter may be, I will follow them."

To this the Governor, with characteristic bluntness, replied:

"It is not true, Mr. Seymour, this story that I have expressed any opinion on the question of the Speakership. I have taken no part in the matter, and will express no wishes as to the result."

Satisfied with this assurance, Mr. Seymour and his friends left the Executive Chamber, and gave publicity to the Governor's declaration of neutrality. In the Democratic caucus held a few hours later, the "Hunker" candidate received 35 votes, and the "Barnburner" 30. The next day Horatio Seymour was formally elected Speaker of the New-York Assembly. On the same afternoon he told Hugh J. Hastings, who was then, as now, a familiar figure in the Capitol, that he looked upon the position as one of the most honorable and distinguished which any American could hope to fill.

Mr. Seymour certainly did his utmost to maintain the dignity of the place which he regarded thus highly. He was an excellent presiding officer, distinguished for his fairness and uniform courtesy to men of all parties, and during the exciting and momentous session which followed his election he was never accused even by his bitterest enemies of making use of his great influence further any private scheme

or personal ambition. Acting always with the "Hunkers" on party questions, he and his friends secured the election of Daniel S. Dickinson to the United States Senate, and indirectly aided in securing for William L. Marcy the portfolio of Secretary of War. He was not equally successful in his efforts to prevent the disorganization of his party. "The Hunker and Barnburner war" continued to increase in bitterness, until at last "the Barnburners" gave signs of favoring a Whig bill providing for a convention to revise the State Constitution. This Mr. Seymour opposed with all his power. He argued with much force, from a party standpoint, that the Democrats were then in absolute possession of all branches of the Government, not only State but national. He drew attention to the fact that a representative of their party sat in the White House, that the Governor of the State and all the State officers were Democrats, that Congress and the Legislature were in their hands, and he warned them that changes could only result in advantage to their political opponents. But his arguments were in vain. The bill ordering the Constitutional Convention was passed, the "Barnburner and Hunker" troubles continued, and culminated in the Van Buren-Cass feud, the election of Taylor to the Presidency, and the overthrow of the Democracy in the nation and State.

## VII.

### GOVERNOR OF NEW-YORK.

For nearly five years after the exciting Legislative session which in great measure contributed to these results, Horatio Seymour remained quietly at his home in Utica, taking no active part in politics, but as usual keeping himself thoroughly and accurately informed of the drift of public affairs. In 1850, his party being in what was regarded as a hopeless minority, he was called from this retirement, and tendered the Democratic nomination for the Governorship. He accepted; made a canvass of characteristic energy and vigor; greatly increased the Democratic vote, but was defeated. Washington Hunt, the Whig candidate, who, as it happened, was a warm personal friend of Mr. Seymour, was supported by the Antirenters, a powerful organization, which drew largely from the Democracy, and was elected by the scant majority of 262.

The remarkably good run which Mr. Seymour made in this contest, coupled with the fact that he had fought bravely, hopefully, to the very last, and under heavy odds, won for him many new friends; and in the bitter and exciting struggle which came two years later he was again placed at the head of the Democratic State ticket. After an exhaustive personal canvass, he was elected over Hunt, the Whig, and Tompkins, the Free-soil candidate, by a majority of several thousand. He entered upon the Governorship at a most exciting period in the history of the State. The advocates of temperance had gone mad—no other word will properly express their condition. They clamored loudly for laws arbitrarily and unqualifiedly prohibiting the sale of liquors. The Legislature of 1854, with the time-serving cowardice characteristic of New-York Legislatures, bowed to the storm which its chief members believed to be a popular one, and passed a most stringent liquor law, similar to that which had recently gone into force in Maine. Gov. Seymour, very properly holding, as he has always done, that no legislative body has the right to rob citizens of their private and personal liberties, after due deliberation, but nevertheless with becoming promptness, braved the bitter enmity of the temperance fanatics, which he was fully aware he must encounter, and vetoed the bill. The salient points of his memorable and much-quoted Message are as follows:

"The bill is wrong because it directs unreasonable searches of the premises and dwellings of our citizens under circumstances calculated to provoke resistance; it deprives persons of their property in a manner prohibited by the Constitution; it sub-



fects them, on mere suspicion of knowledge of a suspected crime, to an inquisitorial examination. \* \* \* For one act of alleged violation of law, a citizen may be proceeded against as a criminal—be fined or imprisoned, and his property seized, or forfeited; he may be proceeded against in civil suits by various parties with whom he has had no dealings, and subjected to the payment of damages where none have been ascertained or proved. To all these prosecutions he may be subjected without the benefit of trial, in the usual and judicial meaning of the term. \* \* \* The idea pervades the bill that unusual, numerous, and severe penalties will secure enforcement, but all experience shows that the undue severity of laws defeats their execution. After the excitement which enacted them has passed away, no one feels disposed to enforce them; for no law can be sustained which goes beyond public feeling and sentiment. \* \* \* The Constitution makes it my duty to point out the objectionable features of this bill, but I owe it to the subject and the friends of the measure to add the expression of my belief that intemperance cannot be extirpated by prohibitory laws. They are not consistent with sound principles of legislation. Like decrees to regulate religious creeds or forms of worship, they provoke resistance when they are designed to enforce obedience. \* \* \* The effort to suppress intemperance by unusual and arbitrary measures proves that the Legislature is attempting to do that which is not within its province to enact, or its power to enforce. This is the error which lies at the foundation of this bill—which distorts its details and makes it a cause of angry controversy. \* \* \* Should it become a law it would render its advocates odious as the supporters of unjust and arbitrary enactments. Its evils would only cease upon its repeal or when it became a dead letter upon the statute-book. Judicial legislation may correct abuses in the manufacture, sale, or use of intoxicating liquors; but it can do no more. All experience shows that temperance, like other virtues, is not produced by lawmakers, but by the influences of education, morality, and religion."

The storm of virtuous indignation which this very judicious and statesmanlike message produced among the temperance people and the political manipulators who sought to curry favor with them cannot be adequately described. On all sides, from the platform, the pulpit, and in the organs of public opinion, Gov. Seymour was unsparingly denounced as an apostle of drunkenness and an alder and abettor of the dram-seller. To such an extent did his veto excite the malignant prejudice of a certain class of the so-called Christian people that every subsequent act of his administration, no matter how trivial or unimportant, was looked upon with suspicion and denounced as wrong. At one time, when he was on the point of writing a Thanksgiving proclamation, a doctor of divinity, celebrated for his learning, piety, and goodness, happened into the Executive Chamber, and as the proclamation was to appeal in a degree to the religious sentiment of the State, Mr. Seymour asked him to write it. He did so in the most orthodox style, but no sooner was it issued than the Governor, whose name was, of course, appended to it, was denounced as a man of an irreligious, immoral, and bad man. One religious paper, the chief organ of the very denomination to which the real author of the proclamation belonged, characterized it as "a disgraceful production; evidently written by a man of infidel tendencies." So, until the end of his term, "the Christian press" and the advocates of temperance continued to vilify and abuse the Governor. Indeed, only one great organ of public opinion could be found which was fearless and independent enough to speak well of him at this trying period in his career. The New-York Times, though, of course, earnestly and unqualifiedly opposed to his political principles, said, regarding his veto of the Liquor bill: "There are very few sober people who will not confess that the Governor's objections to the details of the bill are substantially sound, and entitled to weight." But, of course, these few words of

praise did him no good with his own party, and in the election of 1854, when he was again a candidate for Governor, he was defeated by the opposition of disaffected Democrats. Myron H. Clark, the Waig and Temperance nominee, by a very small plurality, was declared elected in his place. It is worthy of note that in this contest the American, or Know-nothing, Party, which was then at the height of its power, in a total poll of 469,431, cast 122,282 votes.

#### VIII.

#### THE SLAVERY QUESTION AND WAR.

From this point on the politics of the State and nation began to turn more and more upon the slavery question, and Mr. Seymour, once again in private life, though never for a moment anticipating the terrible war which was to follow, saw clearly that the struggle between the slave-holding power and the freedom-loving masses of the North and West was destined to be a most desperate one. Three years before, as a delegate to the national meeting which nominated Pierce for the Presidency, he again and again counseled moderation, and sincerely believing that his life-long friend, William L. Marcy, would be able to avert the danger which threatened the country, he urged his name upon the convention. Owing to the "Baraburner-Hunker" feud, as he still believes, his efforts were unsuccessful. Marcy was made a member of the Cabinet, however, and, verifying Mr. Seymour's predictions, was throughout the whole of the Kansas difficulties the wisest counselor of the Administration. At this time the two gentlemen were in constant communication, and it was, therefore, no surprise to Gov. Seymour to receive, late at night, from Secretary Marcy a telegram asking him to come to Washington without delay. He was not able to comply with the request immediately, however, and two days afterward received the following letter. It is now for the first time made public, and throws additional light on the views of the Kansas troubles entertained by President Pierce and his Cabinet:

Private.] WASHINGTON, Feb. 10, 1856.  
MY DEAR SIR: I sent to you at New-York a telegraph last night urging you to come here forthwith if you could. The object in having you come here is to induce you to go on a commission to Kansas. The President is determined to send two high men immediately to that territory in order to use their influence to adjust the differences there. The mission is truly important, and I sincerely hope you will not hesitate to accept it. It is important that the persons who go out should be there as soon as possible. One Commissioner will be from the North and the other from the South. Yours truly,

W. L. MARCY.

To this letter Mr. Seymour immediately replied, thanking the Secretary for the renewed evidences of his confidence contained in it, but positively declining to serve on the proposed commission. As a reason for this action he wrote that the Governor and other officers of the Territory, duly appointed and recognized, should be able to quiet all disturbances and put an end to the existing difficulties. In conclusion, he urged that the contemplated commission could only embarrass those officers, lessen the respect which the people should have for them, make less their authority, and impair their usefulness. The wisdom of this view was in the end abundantly proved.

Shortly after this correspondence, in the National Democratic Convention of the same year, Horatio Seymour was again one of the most prominent delegates, and was once more indefatigable in his efforts to heal the breaches in the organization of his party. But, despite all his endeavors, the old light of the Barnburners and Hunkers broke out afresh, and, it being decided that both sides should be represented in the convention, many of the New-York leaders went home greatly dissatisfied, and the old

van three men, leaving the Democracy, united with the Free-soilers, and went to make up the Republican Party of the Empire State. It has been said by numbers of usually well-informed politicians of the old school that in this convention Mr. Seymour was favorable to the candidacy of Mr. Douglas. This is a mistake. He persistently urged the re-nomination of President Pierce, but was not unfriendly to Buchanan, and, in the campaign which followed, literally worked night and day to secure the election of that gentleman. Among other memorable speeches delivered by him during the canvass was one addressed to a mass meeting in Massachusetts. In the course of it, he warned the people of New-England against the dangers of sectional division and sectional prejudice, speaking, as he thought, with what might be regarded as rather naive directness and heat. It is noteworthy that the great political turn-coat, Benjamin F. Butler, who was Chairman of the meeting, disagreed with him in this respect, and, commenting upon the portion of his speech referred to, said, "You didn't give it to them half hard enough."

After his inauguration, the President, deeply appreciating the services of Gov. Seymour in his behalf, offered him a foreign mission; but preferring to continue the historical research and study in which he was then engaged, and has always delighted, the Governor, with sincere thanks, declined the honor. He continued, however, to take the liveliest interest in local and State affairs, attending numerous conventions and delivering many political and other speeches.

It was during this period in the history of the State that laws were passed establishing the much criticised system of government by commissions under which occurred the original organization of the Metropolitan Police force of New-York City. These enactments were exceedingly distasteful to the local Democratic managers, if not to the great masses of the party, and on the plea that they were unconstitutional, the Court of Appeals was asked to set them aside. This the court refused to do, Hiram Denio, a pronounced Democrat, but nevertheless an upright Judge, delivering the opinion adverse to his party friends. The feeling against him in consequence was intense, and at the nominating convention, held a few weeks afterward to name a candidate for Justice, his term having expired, he was denounced in unmeasured terms. No one dared say a word in his defense. It seemed as if he had no friend in the convention, and without opposition another candidate was about to be selected for his position. When Horatio Seymour, acting as a delegate from Oneida, rose, and at once commanding that respectful attention which is, and has been always, accorded him in even the most unruly of Democratic assemblages, he said, calmly: "I desire to re-nominate Hiram Denio for Judge of the Court of Appeals!"

If a thunderbolt had fallen among the delegates they could not have been more astonished. They were dumb from surprise, and in the utmost silence listened as the speaker continued: "I desire that we re-nominate him, not because we approve his decision—indeed I am hostile to the system of commissions, and differ with Judge Denio in his views of the law—but because we respect his office, have confidence in his motives, and are willing to accept and observe any statute legitimately passed and affirmed by the courts. I desire that we re-nominate him, because by doing so we will demonstrate the sincerity of the Democratic Party in its professions of respect for an independent judiciary."

The effect of this short address was almost magical. Horatio Seymour has seldom met with opposition in a convention of New-York Democrats. On the occasion in question his victory was complete. Judge Denio was re-nominated by men who a few moments



before had heaped upon him the bitterest abuse. Subsequently he was rejected by the people. There is not in the history of the State a more striking example of the power which a great leader may at times exert over a convention of his political friends.

But the leader of the New-York Democracy was not destined much longer to exert his power in local conventions. He was needed in another field. At this time, momentous and startling events followed each other in quick succession. The great Republican Party was organized from the pine hills of Maine to the slopes of the Pacific. The best sentiment of the American people declared that the odious system of human slavery, which had so long been a disgrace to the nation, should be extended to no new territory. Abraham Lincoln was nominated and elected to the Presidency upon a platform of which this sentiment was the leading plank. The arrogant and traitorous Democratic and State rights leaders of the South rebelled and drove their blind and confiding dupes to arms. The flag of the Union was fired upon, and civil war was declared.

## IX.

### RECOLLECTIONS OF THE REBELLION.

Horatio Seymour, who had known Calhoun and Jackson and Taylor, who had helped to make weak and vacillating James Buchanan President of the United States, who had all his life been an advocate of the doctrine of the rights of States, who was born and bred a Democrat, who had become one of the pillars of his party, must not be denounced because, in this crisis, his sympathies were with the men of the South and against Lincoln and those who declared that the soil of free America should not be polluted by a further extension of slavery. That his most earnest sympathies were so directed there can be no doubt. Indeed, it is a matter of historical record that he believed the Republican leaders and not the slaveholders of the South were driving the country to war and destruction. That his light these views is sufficiently evidenced in his most eloquent speech, delivered before the so-called "Peace Convention," held in Albany soon after the secession of Louisiana, and the withdrawal of Jefferson Davis and his co-conspirators from the Union Senate. In that address he said: "Threescore and ten years, the period allotted for the life of man, have rolled away since George Washington was inaugurated first President of the United States. In the City of New-York. We were then among the feeblest people of the earth. The flag of Great Britain waved over Oswego with insulting defiance of our national rights and the treaty recognizing our independence. The powers of the earth regarded us with indifference or treated us with contemptuous injustice. So swift has been our progress under the influence of our union, that but yesterday we could defy the world in arms and none dared to insult our flag. . . . Some yet live to see our numbers increased from 4,000,000 to 40,000,000, our territories quadrupled and extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific, our power and progress the wonder of the world. Alas! Sir, they have also lived to see the patriotism and paternal love which have wrought out these marvelous results die out, and the mighty fabric of our Government about to crumble and fall because the virtues which reared and upheld it have departed from our councils.

"What a spectacle do we present to-day! Already six States have withdrawn from this Confederacy. Revolution has actually begun. The term 'secession' divests it of none of its terrors, nor do arguments to prove secession inconsistent with our Constitution stay its progress or mitigate its evils. All virtue, patriotism, and intelligence seem to have fled

from our national capital; it has been well likened to the conflagration of an asylum for madmen. Some look on with idiotic imbecility, some in sullen silence, and some scatter the firebrands which consume the fabric above them and bring upon all a common destruction.

The wrongs of our local legislation, the growing burdens of debt and taxation, the gradual destruction of the African in the free States, which is marked by each recurring census, aren't due to the neglect of our own duties caused by the complete absorption of the public mind by a senseless, unreasonable fanaticism. The agitation of the question of slavery has thus far brought greater social, moral, and legislative evil upon the people of the free States than it has upon the institutions of those against whom it has been excited."

These were Gov. Seymour's views expressed before war had actually commenced, and when it was believed by many wise statesmen that the civil struggle could be prevented if the North and the Republican Administration at Washington would make what were called "proper overtures and concessions to the South." After the war began, however, he ceased to be a partisan, and became a patriot. His one aim was to save the Union at no matter what cost. He had no further word of reproach for the Republican Administration. Speaking for the war Democrats, he said: "We denounce the rebellion as most wicked because it wages war against the best Government the world has ever seen." "Throwing aside all personal considerations, he responded to the President's call for troops by serving on committees charged with the enrollment and equipment of volunteers and by frequent and urgent appeals to the young men of his party to hasten to the defense of their country.

## X.

### THE SECOND WAR GOVERNOR.

One of the first and greatest effects of the war was to break up and disband all minor political organizations. Men ceased to be "Free-soilers," "Know-nothings," "Anti-renters," "Hunkers," and "Barnburners"—they were simply Republicans and Democrats, for the Union or against it. This was the condition of parties in the Fall of 1862, when the official term of Edwin D. Morgan, the Republican war Governor was about to close. In an expiring effort, "the Americans" had not determined to act in future with the Democracy, and named Horatio Seymour as their choice for Governor. His friends followed the lead of the men, who had been his bitter political enemies, and he was nominated by the regular Democratic convention. Gen. Wadsworth was made the Republican candidate, and the campaign opened amid almost unparalleled excitement. The Republicans, supported by the National Administration, were confident of success, and Mr. Seymour, encouraged by an immense personal following, was determined and hopeful. He knew, however, that he had a hard, a desperate fight before him, and to win it he took the unusual course of making a close personal canvass and appealing directly to the people for their votes. Most of the prominent Democratic campaign speakers had gone over to the Republicans, and he was forced to take nearly all the burden of the campaign upon his own shoulders. Still, he battled bravely against every difficulty, delivered 60 addresses during the canvass, and was elected by a majority of more than 10,000. On the 1st of January, 1863, he was inaugurated at Albany, in the presence of a great gathering of people. Upon taking his seat, he pledged himself by Oath in his power to aid in preserving the Union, and said, further, "I have solemnly sworn to support the Constitution of the United States, with all its grants, restrictions, and guarantees, and shall support it. I have also sworn to support the

Constitution of the State of New-York with all its powers and rights. I shall uphold it." From his stand-point and to the very best of his great ability Horatio Seymour kept these pledges. No man doubted that he would uphold the Constitution of his native State, but there were many who believed he could not be relied upon to support the war measures of the General Government, or promptly obey the lawful demands of President Lincoln. The men who entertained this opinion were greatly mistaken. Gov. Seymour never failed to respond cheerfully and speedily to every call for help which came to him from the National Administration. How frequent and urgent such calls were the record shows. He had not been in office six months when he received the following telegram:

WASHINGTON, June 15, 1863.

To his Excellency, Gov. Seymour:

The movements of the rebel forces in Virginia are now sufficiently developed to show that Gen. Lee, with his whole army, is moving forward to invade the States of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and other States. The President, to repel this invasion promptly, has called upon Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Western Virginia, for 100,000 Militia for six months, unless sooner discharged. It is important to have the largest possible force in the least time, and if other States would furnish Militia for a short term to be allowed on the draft, it would greatly advance the object. Will you please inform me immediately if in answer to a special call of the President you can raise and forward, say, 20,000 Militia, as volunteers without bounty, to be credited to the draft of your State, or what number you can probably raise? E. M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

Three-quarters of an hour after, the Secretary of War had forwarded this telegram, he received the following reply:

ALBANY, June 15, 1863.

The Hon. E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War, Washington:

I will spare no efforts to send you troops at once. I have sent orders to the Militia officers of the State.

HORATIO SEYMOUR.

Three days later the Governor had fulfilled his promise, and the following dispatch was sent to Washington:

ALBANY, June 18, 1863.

To the Hon. E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War:

About 12,000 men are now on the move for Harrisburg, Penn., in good spirits, and well equipped. The Governor asks, "Shall troops continue to be forwarded?" Please answer.

JOHN T. SPRAGUE, Adjutant-General.

To this the Secretary made the following reply:

[By telegraph from Washington, June 19, 1863.]

To Adj. Gen. Sprague:

The President directs me to return his thanks to his Excellency Gov. Seymour and his staff for their energetic and prompt action. Whether any further force is likely to be required will be communicated to you to-morrow, by which time it is expected the movements of the enemy will be more fully developed. EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

Subsequent telegrams from Washington informed the Governor that no more troops were needed in Pennsylvania, but later on he received the following from Harrisburg:

[By telegraph from Harrisburg, July 2, 1863.]

To his Excellency Gov. Seymour:

Send forward more troops as rapidly as possible. Every hour increases the necessity for large force to protect Pennsylvania. The battles of yesterday were not decisive, and if Meade should be defeated, unless we have a large army this State will be overrun by the rebels. A. G. CURTIN, Governor Pennsylvania.

And to this appeal, as to all others of the same sort, Gov. Seymour sent a prompt and favorable reply. The following is a copy:

NEW-YORK, July 2, 1863.

To Gov. Curtin, Harrisburg, Penna.:

Your telegram is received. Troops will continue to be sent. One regiment leaves to-day, another to-morrow, all in good luck.

JOHN T. SPRAGUE, Adjutant-General.



LINCOLN, SEYMOUR, STANTON.

If any further proof be needed of the fact that President Lincoln and Gov. Seymour were thoroughly in accord, so far as their official relations were concerned, and that they were united in their efforts to put down the rebellion—a fact which has more than once been disputed—it will be found in the following quaintly-worded and characteristic letter from the Republican President and the reply to that letter which was sent by the Democratic Governor. Both communications were written in the strictest confidence, and they are now for the first time given to the public.

(Private and confidential.)

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, }  
March 23, 1863. }

His Excellency Gov. Seymour:

You and I are substantially strangers, and I write this chiefly that we may become better acquainted. I for the time being am at the head of a nation which is in great peril, and you are at the head of the greatest State in that nation. As to maintaining the nation's life and integrity, I assume and believe there cannot be a difference of purpose between you and me. If we should differ as to the means, it is important that such difference should be as small as possible, that it should not be enhanced by unjust suspicions on one side or the other. In the performance of my duty the co-operation of your State as that of others is needed—in fact is indispensable. This alone is sufficient reason why I should wish to be at a good understanding with you. Please write me at least as long a letter as this—of course saying in it just what you think fit. Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN.

To this communication Horatio Seymour made the following reply:

STATE OF NEW-YORK, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, }  
ALBANY, April 14, 1863. }

DEAR SIR: I have delayed answering your letter for some days with a view of preparing a paper in which I wish to state clearly the aspect of public affairs from the standpoint I occupy. I do not claim any superior wisdom, but I am confident the opinions I hold are entertained by one-half of the population of the Northern States. I have been prevented from giving my views in the manner I intended by a pressure of official duties, which, at the present stage of the legislative session of this State, confine me to the Executive Chamber until each midnight; after the adjournment, which will soon take place, I will give you, without reserve, my opinion and purposes with regard to the condition of our unhappy country.

In the meantime, I assure you that no political resentments, no personal purposes, will turn me aside from the pathway I have marked out for myself. I intend to show those charged with the administration of public affairs a due deference and respect, and to give to them a just and generous support in all measures they may adopt within the scope of their constitutional powers. For the preservation of this Union I am ready to make any sacrifice of interest, passion, or prejudice. Truly yours,  
HORATIO SEYMOUR.

To His Excellency ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

It will be noticed that this letter contemplates a further and longer communication from the Governor to the President. The events attending the invasion of Pennsylvania by Lee rendered such a writing unnecessary. The Governor testified by his acts his anxiety to aid the General Government. After those acts—and I use his own words—he "could not well write without seeming to boast of what had been done." In connection with the correspondence, however, it is worthy of particular note that Gov. Seymour, in addition to the Hon. Simon Cameron and one other distinguished man with whom I have conversed on the subject, is firmly convinced that there was at one time what can only be called a conspiracy, set on foot and engaged in by a number of Republican leaders, to force President Lincoln out of the White House. Regarding this movement, ex-Senator Cameron said to me in May, 1878: "Late in 1862 or early in 1863 there can be no doubt that a secret effort was made to bring

THE DRAFT RIOTS OF 1863.

Early in July, 1863, Gov. Seymour received from Gen. Wool, the United States officer in command of the department, a letter in which he declared that New-York City was absolutely without defense from attacks, which might be made by rebel gun-boats or ships-of-war, and asked for State troops to hold the harbor fortifications. The communication was a most urgent one. The City of New-York was not only the financial centre of the Union, but, to a great extent, the treasury of the nation, and the storehouse of the Army and Navy. Knowing that such an attack as Gen. Wool feared would be followed by evils, the extent of which no man could estimate, Gov. Seymour, without delay, set about complying with the request made by the representative of the Government, and at the same time determined that he would himself make an inspection of the fortifications. Accompanied by ex-Gov. Morgan and Controller Robinson, he did so, and found that Gen. Wool's fears were only too well founded. The so-called defenses on the East River and in the harbor were tantamount to no defenses at all, and at Throgg's Neck many of the guns commanding the entrance to the City through the Sound were not even mounted. Thoroughly alarmed, and greatly fearing that some adventurous rebel cruiser might obtain information of the City's condition, the Governor, with characteristic energy, gave orders for the transportation of troops from Rochester and other points in the interior to the City fortifications. On Sunday, July 12, while he was at Long Branch, and still engaged in this work of providing for the defense of the coast, he was startled by a telegram, informing him that the long-threatened and much-dreaded conscription of men for the Union Army had been commenced in New-York City. This telegram was a private one. Gov. Seymour never received any official notification that the draft was to commence, or that it had commenced, nor was any such notification sent to Mr. Opdyke, the Mayor of the City, or to Gen. Wool, the United States officer in command. Without any communication with those gentlemen or with the Department of Police, and without for a moment considering that the forts and arsenals of the City had been stripped of their garrisons, that nearly every volunteer soldier and Militiaman in the State had, at the urgent call of the President, been hurried off to the support of Meade and the defense of terror-stricken Pennsylvania, the Provost Marshal—at whose order is to this day a matter of doubt—commenced the draft. The drawing began on Saturday in a district where the enrollment was so excessive, so grossly unjust, that the Government subsequently ordered it to be changed. Most of those whose names came from the wheel were of one nationality, a nationality noted as much for its warm-hearted impulse and reckless generosity as for its tendency to riot and disorder. The names of the conscripts appeared in the papers on Sunday, when they had ample time to meet together and curse the conscription. It has been claimed that there was in all this a deep-seated design, for political purposes, to force a portion of the community into such excesses as would make it necessary to declare the Empire City under martial law. This claim has not been justified, but that the Provost Marshals, or those behind them, by their action in the matter, threw prudence, propriety, and common sense to the winds there can, in view of subsequent events, be no doubt.

Because of his connection with the terrible riots which followed this conscription, managed or mismanaged, as it was, with criminal recklessness, Gov. Seymour has been as savagely criti-

about the ejection of President Lincoln from the White House. Some time after I returned from the Russian mission, and while I was resting at my home in Pennsylvania, I received from a number of the most prominent gentlemen an invitation to visit Washington and attend a meeting which, according to my information, was to be held in regard to national affairs. I afterward discovered that this invitation was extended to me because it was believed that my somewhat unpleasant exit from the War Department had rendered me hostile to Mr. Lincoln and his Administration. Knowing nothing of this at the time, however, I went to the capital and found there assembled a number of prominent men who had come together ostensibly for the purpose of advising with each other regarding the condition of the country. This, I say, was their ostensible purpose, but I soon found that their real object was to find means by which the President could be impeached and turned out of office. The complaint against Mr. Lincoln was that he lacked ability and energy, and that he was not pushing the war with sufficient vigor. These reasons and the plan of attack, if I may use the expression, were all made known to me, and I was asked for my advice. I gave it, stating with as much earnestness as I could command, that the movement proposed would be a disastrous one, and strongly urging that it would be little short of madness to interfere with the Administration."

Gov. Seymour, though not in possession of those minute details of the scheme, is confident not only that it existed, but that President Lincoln was aware of its existence. It is just possible that this knowledge accounts for the great anxiety which he, at different times, displayed to be on intimate friendly terms with Mr. Seymour and other prominent Democrats whom he could trust. That he did display that anxiety there can be no doubt. Indeed, it can be stated upon the authority of an eminent Republican veteran of the City of New-York, who was closely identified with his Administration, that he, on at least one occasion, said, in substance: "If Gov. Seymour would like to be President of the United States nothing stands in his way." It, at least, cannot be denied that he caused an intimation of this character to be conveyed to the Governor. Nor was he alone in his desire to be "at a good understanding" with the leader of the New-York Democracy. Edwin M. Stanton, the most radical member of his Cabinet, expressed a strong desire in the same direction. The proof of this statement will be found in the following confidential communication, which, like the letters of Messrs. Lincoln and Seymour, now appear in print for the first time:

(Confidential.)

WAR DEPARTMENT, }  
WASHINGTON, June 27, 1863. }

DEAR SIR: I cannot forbear expressing to you the deep obligation I feel for the prompt and efficient support you have given to the Government in the present emergency. The energy, activity, and patriotism you have exhibited I may be permitted personally and officially to acknowledge without arrogating any personal claim on my part in such service, or to any service whatever.

I shall be happy to be always esteemed your friend,

EDWIN M. STANTON.

His Excellency HORATIO SEYMOUR.

Still more significant is the following telegram, to which, for reasons that need not be stated, Mr. Seymour made no reply:

BY TELEGRAPH FROM WASHINGTON, }  
May 23, 1864. }

The Hon. Gov. Seymour:

Would it be possible for you to come to Washington immediately, to enable me to confer with you personally on some matters of great personal interest? Please answer. EDWIN M. STANTON.

To what matter of great "personal interest" the Senator referred Mr. Seymour may have suspected, but he failed to enter into the communication by means of which he could have been definitely informed.



cised, and, perhaps, more bitterly denounced than any public man of his time. It is possible that the following details of that connection, heretofore known only to a few intimate friends, may cause those who so criticised and denounced him to form a different, and it may be a juster, opinion of his motives and action. On Sunday night, when he first received word that the draft was actually in progress, he tried to make his way to the City, but found that he could not do so. The next morning, at a very early hour, he received a second telegram, informing him that serious disturbances were expected to follow the announcement of the conscription. Fearing the worst, and without having taken food, he hurried to the Metropolis, and, being previously advised, went at once to the St. Nicholas Hotel. Here he found Mayor Opdyke, Gen. Wool, and Mr. Barney, the Collector of the Port, already assembled. Without disparagement to those gentlemen, it may be said that they were more sensible of the danger which threatened the City than they were of any expedient by which it might be averted. They had every reason to be alarmed. A mob, comprising thousands of ruffians maddened by drink, was at large in the streets. The Provost Marshal's office had been sacked, and the block of buildings in which it was situated, burned to the ground. The fire-bells tolled out terrible warnings. Clouds of lurid smoke shut out the sun. The authorities were openly defied. Blood ruled the town. No man could say what 22 hours would bring forth. The very air was filled with untold alarm.

Hardly had the chief magistrate of the State arrived at the St. Nicholas Hotel when the provost, fearing that his presence and that of other officers of the law might incite the mob to attack the building, begged him for God's sake to leave it. He and Mayor Opdyke did so. They hastened to the City Hall, and with the scant means at their command did everything possible to put down the disturbances. The City was declared in a state of insurrection. In order that there might be no conflict between the Militia and the Police force, which was believed to be unfriendly to the State Government, Mr. Seymour gave to Gen. Ledlie, a Republican, authority to represent him, and to deal with the Police and military.

But still the riot went on. Men were shot down in the streets; houses were sacked, and great buildings fell crumbling in flame. A crowd gathered round the City Hall. There were in it quiet, respectable men, and others mad with excitement. The Governor was called upon to speak. Hoping to disperse the mob, desiring to convince the good citizens in the crowd, and above all things, wishing to gain time, protect property, and prevent bloodshed, (these were his motives, as he himself has explained them to me,) he went boldly before the excited people, and implored them to disperse to their homes without further violations of the peace. At the same time he said, according to one report of his short and hurried speech—a report the accuracy of which he has even now no desire to question—"I beg you to listen to me as a friend, for I am your friend and the friend of your families." Further than this, he assured them that if they had been wronged in any way, he would use every exertion to see that justice was done them. Then the crowd left the City Hall square, and from that day to this Horatio Seymour has been by one class of the community denounced for "holding a parley with bloody criminals" and making "friends" of thieves, cut-throats, and ruffians. Gen. Seymour does not desire to reply to these attacks. In vindication of his course—if such vindication be necessary—he simply points to the fact that in 48 hours the riots—undoubtedly the most formidable which ever occurred on this continent—were checked and controlled by the State and City authorities without aid from

the General Government. In order to accomplish this result it was necessary for the law officers, acting under the authority of the Governor, to shoot down nearly a thousand of the rioters whom he has been accused of "temporizing" with.

Regarding this terrible period in the history of the City, Gov. Seymour has long remained silent, but touching the manner in which the riots were suppressed he now authorizes the following statement, which, it may be well to add, is given in his own words: "The dreadful riots of 1863 were put down mainly by the energy, boldness, and skill of the Police Department. In saying this I am certainly not influenced by prejudice, for the force was politically, and, in some degree personally, so friendly to myself. Indeed, in their reports they have not seen fit to make mention of any operation on my part with their efforts. But they did their duty bravely and efficiently. They proved that the City of New York could by its Police alone, in the absence of its military organizations, cope with the most formidable disorders. I do not know of any instance in history where so many desperate men were shot down mainly by the Police of a city. More than a thousand of the rioters were killed or wounded to death. Yet so little justice has been done to the City of New York that many think it was protected by the forces of the United States. In fact, the Navy-yard, the vast amount of military stores of the General Government, and its money in the Sub-Treasury, were mainly protected by the civil officers. So protected while the military organizations of the State were absent in Pennsylvania in answer to an appeal from the Government of the United States to help it against an invasion of General Lee. Even Gen. Grant, in one of his papers, spoke of the riot in New York as an occasion when the General Government had helped State or local authorities to maintain peace and order. I wrote to him correcting this error, and it gives me pleasure to say that he received my communication in a spirit of courtesy and of fairness which ever marks the character of an honorable man. It is now time that justice should be done the City of New York in this matter, and in the hope that such justice may be done I repeat these facts."

Before leaving this period in Gov. Seymour's life, it will be well to add that subsequent to the riots, Mr. Watson, then Assistant Secretary of War, told him that a number of prominent men had made application to the National Administration to place the City under martial law, and that he (Watson) was sent to New York to see if there was any warrant or necessity for such action; that he could find none, and had reported to the department that Gov. Seymour and the civil authorities were doing everything that could be done to keep the peace.

## XIII

### A CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY

Of Mr. Seymour's career in the Executive chair after the riots, and of his action in regard to the arrest of the State Agents and the suspension of newspapers in New York City, it need only be said that all the facts are already before the public. As his term of office drew to a close, he was most anxious to retire to his quiet home in the Valley of the Mohawk, but against his inclination a renomination was forced upon him. He was induced to accept it by friends, who urged that his refusal, coupled with the fact that he had not favored the nomination of Gen. McClellan in the National Democratic Convention of 1864, over which he had presided, would be regarded as an evidence that he had no confidence in that gentleman's ability to carry the country. He went into the campaign with his usual energy, but was defeated, and relinquishing his office to Reuben E. Fenton, and the most sincere wishes for his successful administration, he once more, retired to private

life. He still continued to take great interest in public affairs, however, and during the next four years frequently appeared in meetings and conventions of the Democracy.

In 1869, the war being over and the reconstruction of the recently rebellious States commenced, he once more came before the country as the presiding officer of the memorable Democratic convention then held in New York. It was the duty of that convention to nominate for the Presidency a man who could defeat the candidature of the victorious and exultant Republicans. Mr. Seymour feared that no "straight" Democrat was equal to this task, nor did he think that the election of such a man would, under the circumstances, be of benefit to his party. It had been fully demonstrated after the assassination of Lincoln and during the administration of Johnson that, without a Congress at his back, with the National Senate overwhelmingly Republican as it was, no Democrat could hope to accomplish any results beneficial to his political friends. On the other hand, he believed that the advocacy by the Democracy of some Independent Republican, who would declare in favor of what the Democratic speakers then delighted to call "the restoration of the judicial as against the military power," would result in success and benefit to them. For these reasons, he believed that Salmon P. Chase, the eminent Republican jurist, who, it was believed, was ready to desert his party, should be nominated. Under these circumstances the convention met, and for nearly a week balloted in vain for a candidate. The delegates were worn out with the continued strain, excitement, and intense heat, but still no one received votes enough to be declared the nominee. The twenty-second ballot was reached, and then the great meeting was startled by Gen. McCook, the Chairman of the Ohio delegation, who, in a speech of ringing eloquence, cast the 21 votes of his State for Horatio Seymour. Chase, after cheer greeted this demonstration, and it was several moments before Mr. Seymour could be heard. At last, some degree of order being restored, he declared in the most unqualified terms that he could not accept the nomination. The delegates would not take this refusal. The balloting went on. Wisconsin changed her votes to Seymour, and then the end had come. Every delegate in the hall sprang to his feet. Maryland, Illinois, Texas, Delaware, Virginia, Vermont, Georgia, and Louisiana in quick succession were heard changing their votes to Seymour. The confusion swelled until it became tumultuous and uncontrolled. Mr. Seymour protested with all his might. His friends at first begged, and at last almost forced, him to leave the chair. When he returned the voting had been completed, the ticket made up, and he was declared to be the Democratic candidate for the Presidency of the United States. He accepted the nomination, and by doing so made, as he still believes, the great mistake of his life. Having entered the canvass, however, no man knew that he was dissatisfied with his position. He worked with all his old-time energy and enthusiasm. Indeed, until the Pennsylvania election he was even hopeful of the result, but after it was announced that the Keystone State was Republican and would give an overwhelming majority in favor of Gen. Grant, the victorious soldier who had been made the candidate of that party, he was convinced that he could not succeed, and devoted all his energies to saving his own State. To do this it was necessary to make a fight along the whole line, and he went into the canvass through all the Northern States. The campaign in which he then engaged was one of the most remarkable in the political history of the country. His personal canvass was more thorough and far-reaching than that made by any candidate for the Presidency before or

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since, but all his efforts, all the efforts of his friends, were in vain. His defeat was complete—painfully complete. He bore it like the wise man that he is. When President Grant visited Utica he was one of the first to congratulate him, and, at a public reception, said good-humoredly that he was a better soldier than the General, and for the reason that he was not able to run so well.

#### XIV.

##### REFUSING HIGH OFFICE.

After his defeat, Gov. Seymour made up his mind that he would never again be a candidate for office, and he has allowed nothing to change his purpose. He might have been made United States Senator at the end of Mr. Fenton's term, but he declined to enter the canvass, throwing all his influence for Senator Keruan, who, singularly enough, was one of those who most sincerely desired him to take the place. In 1876 the Democratic State Convention, against his earnest protest, nominated him for the Governorship, but though well assured that he could be elected by a majority of at least 30,000, he would not accept, and the party managers were obliged to nominate Gov. Robinson. While he is thus determined in his resolution not to accept office, however, he continues with even more than his usual activity to take part in the affairs of his State, county, and town. Within the last year or two he has delivered more than a score of addresses, speaking on "The Topography of New York," "The Influence of New-York on American Jurisprudence," "The Use of Short Words," "The Tramp Nuisance," "Dairy Farms," "The Centennial of the Cherry Valley Massacre," "Our State Prisons," and many other subjects.

No man has greater faith in the progress and future of the American Republic than Horatio Seymour. It is related of him that on a recent occasion while seated at a public dinner with Lord Houghton, of England, that gentleman said to him:

"Gov. Seymour, are you not sometimes sorry that Mother England let your States escape from under her wing?"

"Well, no, my Lord, not exactly," said the Governor, with a sly twinkle in his eye, "but I do sometimes think we should not have allowed you to leave us!"

"What in the world do you mean?" asked his Lordship, laughing good-humoredly, but evidently a little astonished.

"Oh, simply that it would be rather pleasant to have you in the family of States," replied the Governor. "Having 50,000,000 of people on our side, of course we could do most of the governing. Still, for the sake of old relationship, I have no doubt we could have afforded to allow you a few extra Congressmen and a Senator or two." Lord Houghton caught the spirit of the joke, and seemed to enjoy it immensely.

#### XV.

##### A MOHAWK VALLEY HOME.

A century and a half ago Gov. Cosby, one of the colonial rulers of New-York, obtained a patent for 24,000 acres of land in the Valley of the Mohawk, where the City of Utica now stands. The grant, like others of a similar character, was subject to certain "quit-rents," which were reserved to the Crown. These rents remained unpaid, and, before the Revolution, the land known as the Cosby Manor was thrown into the market. Gen. Philip Schuyler, for himself and three other persons, bought it. One of his associates in the purchase was Rutgers Bleecker, an ancestor of the lady who is now Mrs. Horatio Seymour. An estate of 500 acres, once a part of the manor, is still in her possession. It is situated upon a slope of the Deerfield hills, which rise gently on the northern bank of the Mohawk, less than three miles from

Utica. The crest of one of the elevations is crowned by a low, but roomy, unpretending, but most comfortable, two-story cottage, the main floor of which is almost level with the bright green lawn that stretches on one side as far as the eye can reach, and on the other is lost in a dark forest of old and mighty trees. From the broad porch of this cottage, looking for 15 miles over the Valley of the Mohawk, may be seen the pathway over which, during the last half century, there has passed the greatest movement of the human race the world has ever known—the pathway by which the people of Europe have found their way into the great West—a movement not of wild hordes or of great armies, but of civilization and industry, which has built up great cities in desert places. Beyond the valley, over on the other side of the river, rise the hills which formed the council chamber, the seat of government of the Iroquois, the great confederacy which, before the white man conquered, held control of the country from the coast to the Mississippi and the Illinois, from north of the mighty lakes to what is now the State of North Carolina. But not only this. The range of hills which are thus seen forms one of the most remarkable water-sheds on the face of the earth, a water-shed from whose slopes are poured streams which find outlets in the tepid waters of tropical seas and in the frozen oceans of the North.

The modest brown cottage so situated and so surrounded is the home of Horatio Seymour. Entering it upon almost any Summer morning, the master of the house—strong, keen-eyed, and quick-witted in spite of advancing age—may be found seated in a quaint, odd-cornered library, his favorite room. It is filled with books; there are books, papers, and maps everywhere. Old documents and deeds relating to the early history of New-York hang upon the wall, one of them testifying to the fact that George Washington, shrewd business man that he was, speculated in Mohawk Valley lands; while another rather demolishes Charles Sumner's theory that Massachusetts was always opposed to the slave-trade by setting forth that, in the year of grace 1711, "Coffee, a negro man slave," was sold into that colony from New-York, and that the transfer was made "in the name of God and the Christian religion." Old fire-arms, flintlocks, swords, and powder-horns, each of which tells some story of bygone days, appear in stray nooks. The office chair for many years used by Daniel Webster—heavy, comfortable, and black with age—stands in front of the roomy table which serves as a desk, and in an out-of-the-way corner, between two tall windows, a great Dutch clock, evidently an old family relic, gives warning of the passing hours. It was in this library, opening on a charmingly-appointed sitting-room, in which the graceful and winning wife of the veteran statesman spends most of her time, that Horatio Seymour told me the story of his life.

#### XVI.

##### APPLES OF GOLD IN PICTURES OF SILVER.

"And during all these years and through all these struggles, have you had any one aim or end in view?" I asked the Governor when he had finished the recital. His ready response was:

"Yes; yes indeed, and if you like, I will tell you just what it has been."

"I should like very much to hear," was, of course, my reply, and he went on:

"I have aimed to take an interest in everything in this world with which I had a right to concern myself."

"During a long life I have learned that people who have the happiest and healthiest minds take an active part in everything which con-

cerns their community, their State, or the country at large."

"A proper interest and sympathy for others gives men vigorous minds and a broad view. While selfish views tend to contract even great intellects."

"A thoroughly selfish man must, in the end, be a thoroughly unhappy one."

"The study of men has taught me still another great truth. It is that, while their conditions as to wealth, the characters of their homes and surroundings are very different, the variety of worlds they live in is still more varied."

"Money may fix the character of a man's house, but only intelligence and culture can give beauty and interest to the sphere or world in which he passes his life."

"Every single object on this earth is of value to those who know its character, its history, and its use, while those who are ignorant of these things take no interest even in the choicest productions of nature."

"To one man the heavens are filled with great systems of mighty worlds. To another the skies are simply so much blue space dotted with bright, but to them meaningless, points of light. To one the earth is an exhaustless museum, giving endless subjects for study, thought, and happiness; to another it is simply a field in which to grow potatoes and cabbages."

"Appreciating and acting on these familiar truths, I decided at an early age to take an active interest in everything that concerned the general welfare, and, above all, to keep my mind vigorous and sympathetic."

"I determined to learn something, no matter how little, regarding every object or subject which came under my notice."

"I did not seek to be learned in a high degree with regard to any of these things, but I did seek from my own labor and the labor of others to gain a reasonably clear conception of the progress of science and the ends it had gained."

"I believed that by doing so, while life lasted, no matter what change of health or fortune came, I would be able to find some subject or object in the world by which I might be interested and rendered content."

For several moments after he said this Gov. Seymour remained silent. Then I asked: "Governor, do you think that the people of the United States are losing interest in political affairs?"

"No," he replied, with much emphasis. "No; to the American people, to the men of the country districts at least, political duty will always be regarded as one which must be performed."

"There may be in the large cities men who, because of business connections, fail to do the service which the State has a right to expect from them, but in the country, where the masses of the voters live, politics will always be, to a great extent, continental."

"In short, the love for party in the average citizen of this country will always be a sentiment—a sentiment which can no more be eradicated than can a belief in religion."

"The leaders of to-day are so unduly secretive, suspicious, and, as they believe, diplomatic, that they fail to attract to them that personal following which was given to men like Calhoun and Henry Clay, but to their parties our people will forever cling."

Regarding the system of human slavery which was overthrown by the war, Gov. Seymour has thought deeply. During one of our conversations he said: "The system of slavery as it existed in the South was upheld by three parties—the planters, the weavers, and the weavers of cotton. Two of the parties lived at the North and one at the South. That the system would die out rapidly at the South, as it had at the North, I believed and still believe. It could never have sustained itself when the supply of cotton was equal to the natural demand. For some time before the war slaves had productive value in only five States. These



kept up a market value in the other sections. This fact of itself tended to destroy slavery, for it carried the negroes into the Gulf States and lessened the value of laborers. The people of the far South knew this so well that laws were passed there prohibiting the introduction of slaves. In this way it was hoped that their value might be kept up.

"It is now well understood that the negroes, though the war checked their progress, are so numerous that Southern planters could not afford to own them.

"The sentiment of hostility to slavery was a just one, but sentiment alone are not sufficient to guide men. An incident in my own career will illustrate this.

"During my terms Governor I was very anxious that my first pardon should be right beyond question. Even while I was thinking on the subject I received a letter from the officers of one of our prisons which stated that a negro convict had been confined in their institution for more than 20 years; that his conduct had been good in all respects; that he had made himself useful in many ways, and that they placed full confidence in him. His time was soon to expire, and they asked that he be granted a pardon, a certificate of good conduct which would help him when he was again out in the world.

"I knew of none who could show a better record for so long a time, and I granted the pardon. For a week I thought over the matter, and was satisfied with what I had done. At the end of that time, however, what was my surprise to receive from the pardoned convict a letter in which he said that for more than 20 years he had lived in the State Prison, and had tried to do his duty. Such being the case, he wanted to know why the Governor had turned him out at the beginning of Winter to starve and freeze, when if he had been let alone until Summer he could have taken care of himself.

"This incident," Mr. Seymour continued, "taught me the great lesson that mere sentiment, however virtuous, without care and wisdom, may at times do more harm than good.

"But, whatever the errors of the past may have been, it is now clearly the duty of all our people to do their best to improve the condition of the negroes in the United States. Not only justice and humanity, but the prosperity of the country, particularly of the South, call for the highest possible development of their intelligence, their morals, their social condition, and material prosperity."

#### XVII.

#### NEVER AGAIN.

Horatio Seymour and William L. Marcy, as has already been stated, were warm friends. When Mr. Marcy left the office of Secretary of State, at the close of President Pierce's Administration, he sent for Gov. Seymour. He was an old man, and wanted to consult as to his future with his younger associate. It may be that he knew he was on the brink of the grave. When his friend came to him at his home, he greeted him with much cordiality, but with a solemnity which was not usual with him. Then, apparently as if carrying out a long-cherished purpose, he began to recite the important incidents in his long and busy career. He told eloquently of his struggles at the outset to gain a standing in his profession, related how he had been advanced to the office of Judge, to the Governorship of his State, to the Senate of the United States, and to positions in the Cabinets of Presidents Polk and Pierce. Then he continued:

"Mr. Seymour, in this long life I have had many problems to solve, but I am now called upon to meet one which troubles and perplexes me more than any that have gone before. That problem is how to leave the stage of pub-

lic action with dignity, and yet in a way that will not show an indifference to the interests of the country, to the party, or to my friends. I do not wish to hang about the stage like a superannuated actor, nor would I seem to turn my back on the world after I have had all the honors I can expect from it."

In a few days an all-ruling Providence solved this problem for William L. Marcy. While apparently in the best of health, lying upon a sofa turning over the leaves of a book, his heart ceased to beat.

Referring to his last conversation with Mr. Marcy, Gov. Seymour said to me:

"That last interview with the good, great man who had been my life-long friend impressed me deeply. I then made up my mind that no man should cheat himself out of the repose of his old age. In his last days, if his life had not been a barren one, it seemed to me that every man should have much to think of, that he should devote himself to such thought and to such usefulness in his private circle as he might be fitted for. It is for these reasons that I have determined not to accept public station."

From the determination thus formed, Horatio Seymour may be trusted not to depart. H. C.





